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Albania: The Problem of the Adriatic

WHEN on June 5 Yugoslavia broke off diplomatic relations with Italy's new ally, Albania, a fresh phase was reached in the diplomatic war which began on the 27th of November last between Yugoslavia and Italy. The recent break was ostensibly due to the arrest on charge of espionage of an Albanian interpreter in the employ of the Yugoslav legation at Tirana. The Albanian Government received from the Yugoslav *chargé d'affaires* a protest couched in strong terms claiming diplomatic immunity for the arrested interpreter and demanding his immediate release. The Albanian Government, replying that it had not previously been informed of the man's connection with the Yugoslav legation, asked that, as a preliminary to his release, the Yugoslav *chargé* retract the "undiplomatic language" he had employed in his communication. The latter retorted by asking for his visa, and at the same time the Yugoslav Government handed a passport to the Albanian Minister at Belgrade.

Albania's next move was to lay its case immediately before the League of Nations. Thus, after a delay of three months the ques-

tion of Albania's status has come before the League Council which will consider it at its present session. Although the question became acute in March, the matter was not submitted to the Council at that time because of Italy's disinclination to have the question reviewed while it was still in that particular stage of development.

The present period of special strain between Yugoslavia and Italy began when the latter, on November 27, 1926, announced the conclusion of a treaty of friendship, arbitration, and cordial collaboration with Albania.* Yugoslav statesmen believed that the Treaty of Tirana amounted to a declaration of Italy's intention to establish a protectorate over Albania; as such it was highly distasteful to Belgrade. Yugoslavia was not alone in its concern at the implications of the announcement. In the course of four months it caused diplomatic flurries in the chancelleries of France, Great Britain and Germany as well—a fact which indicated that the principles of the new treaty involved matters of more than local significance.

*See Annex II, page 121.

The most vital object concerned in the diplomatic struggle which has ensued between Yugoslavia and Italy has been the control of the Adriatic.

That sea, a long arm of the Mediterranean pushed northwestward into the land-mass of Europe between Italy and the Balkans, is bordered by three political states, but is the natural outlet for the commerce of at least five. Italy, Yugoslavia and Albania occupy its immediate shores, but Austria and Hungary, lying to the northward beyond Italy and Yugoslavia, have not entirely lost touch with it, for although they are now deprived of the four hundred miles of seacoast they once controlled, a certain portion of their commerce still finds a natural outlet by way of the Adriatic.

Even a country so far removed as Poland has recently found it convenient to discuss its commercial interests in the Adriatic. A proportionately warmer interest in the region is taken by Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece on account of their geographical proximity to the Adriatic. But facing each other across the narrow sea, Italy and Yugoslavia have since the war become the two chief competitors in a struggle to gain control of Adriatic seaports.

ITALIAN POWER PREPONDERATES IN ADRIATIC

Of the two, Italy is acknowledged to enjoy the stronger position by far. In the first place Italy has no fewer than four naval bases at strategic points in the Adriatic—at Brindisi, Venice, Pola and Saseno. A considerable proportion of the total tonnage of its naval units (307,351 tons) is usually available for service in this section. Yugoslavia, by contrast, has a total naval tonnage of 2,912, and not all of its tiny navy is in the Adriatic, some of its ships having been designated for use on the Danube.

Italy also controls better seaports on the Adriatic than does Yugoslavia. It has not only Brindisi and Venice, to name only two of the more famous cities on the Italian shore of the Adriatic, but Trieste and Fiume as well, and in addition to these the enclave of Zara a third of the way down the Yugoslav coast. Yugoslavia, on the other hand, controls the less famous ports of Cattaro, Ragusa, Spalato and Sebenico, together with that of Susak, a suburb of Fiume. The com-

merce of Yugoslav ports although rapidly increasing is still considerably less than that of Italian ports.

Italy's rail communication with its own Adriatic ports is better than the rail connection between Yugoslav ports and their hinterland. Built during the pre-war period, most of the railroads serving Dalmatian ports led northward to Hungary and were not calculated to meet the needs of the present owners of either the ports or the railways. The situation was remedied somewhat when during August of last year direct rail communications were opened up between Spalato and the interior. But the existing lines, many of them of narrow gauge, are quite inadequate to serve Yugoslavia's commercial needs either potential or present, and a considerable part of Yugoslav trade has to find its outlet on that account through Italian, Greek and Austrian territory.

Again, Italy has for some time enjoyed the advantage of controlling the trans-Adriatic cables; and more recently the trans-Adriatic air service has come into the hands of Italian nationals.

Finally, Italian predominance in the Adriatic is to be explained by the fact that its vested interests there antedate those of Yugoslavia, which fell heir to the Dalmatian coast only after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the war.

SERBO-ITALIAN RIVALRY ACTIVE, 1918-1924

The rivalry of Italy and Yugoslavia in the Adriatic became apparent as soon as post-war settlements began to be seriously discussed. Diplomatic controversies did not cease with the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo (November, 1920) whereby a boundary settlement was provided for the two countries. Indeed the controversies continued for almost four years longer, throughout that restless period which was punctuated by disorderly incidents in Fiume and by Italy's attempted seizure of the Greek Island of Corfu, just beyond the outlet of the Adriatic.

Thus it was not until 1924 that a lull came in the active rivalry of Italy and Yugoslavia. There came a new departure in Yugoslav foreign policy when in that year M. Nintchitch, the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, persuaded his colleagues to support him in a policy of reconciliation with Italy.



Prepared by the Foreign Policy Association.

POLITICAL MAP OF THE BALKANS

The protracted quarrel concerning the status of the free city of Fiume was settled by recognizing Italian sovereignty over all but the Yugoslav suburb of Susak, while the general relations of the two countries were improved by the conclusion of a pact of friendship, cordial collaboration and neutrality.*

In further pursuance of the new policy of reconciliation there was negotiated during 1926 a long series of technical agreements

to regularize administration in the territories Italy and Yugoslavia had received from Austria-Hungary. These were intended to govern the treatment of minorities, to settle Austro-Hungarian property claims, to determine railway tariffs and to regulate common administrative, commercial, political and social difficulties in general—such as, for instance, the management of the postal service, the determination of consular duties and privileges, the guaranteeing of

*See Annex I, page 120.

personal security and freedom of communication. They were to cover also such matters as legislation for bankruptcy, public charity and public industrial enterprises.

The discussion of these conventions in the Yugoslav parliament prior to ratification led to violent anti-Italian demonstrations in the provinces, particularly in Croatia, Slovenia and Dalmatia, where it was believed that the agreements would give to Italians in Yugoslavia much more substantial privileges than would be enjoyed by Slovene colonists in Italy. Only six of the conventions were actually ratified. The other twenty-six, popularly referred to as the Neptune Conventions, were so violently attacked in the country itself that parliament was prorogued before a vote could be taken on the question of their ratification.

REVERSAL TO UNFRIENDLY RELATIONS, NOV. 1926

The public outcry against the Neptune Conventions had not yet been stilled by M. Nintchitch's repeated assurances that they could do no injury to Yugoslav integrity, when the Treaty of Tirana between Italy and Albania was published. The latter had an immediate repercussion in Yugoslavia. It was regarded there as a deliberate betrayal of Yugoslav interests by Italy. Nintchitch and the Cabinet which had sponsored an Italophile policy resigned in protest against Italy's unexpected action. Nothing more was heard in Yugoslavia about the ratification of the Neptune Conventions. Once more relations between Italy and Yugoslavia became strained.

Now as before the question at issue between them was the division of influence in the Adriatic. But this time the centre of interest had shifted from Fiume in the north to Albania at the southern end of the Adriatic.

The Treaty of Tirana was significant chiefly because it bound Italy to support the *status quo*, political, juridical and territorial, in Albania, and because Albania and Italy mutually pledged themselves by it not to conclude with other Powers political or military agreements prejudicial to each other's interests.

It was frequently pointed out in the press

that a treaty of this sort between a strong nation and a weak one could mean only one thing—the domination of the latter by the former. Nevertheless, within two weeks of its publication Albania had ratified the new treaty—but not until Baron Aloisi, the Italian plenipotentiary, had assured Albania on behalf of the Italian Government that the phrase “mutual support and collaboration” was meant to apply only to situations in which a proposal for action had been made by one of the parties and voluntarily accepted by the other. It would come into operation only if one of the two parties so requested. Thus Albanians were justified, theoretically at least, in assuming that they were not bestowing upon Italy the right to interfere in their own affairs at will, without the specific consent of the Albanian authorities themselves.

In spite of the official interpretation of the treaty Yugoslavia was alarmed by the power it placed in Italy's hands. It protested that whether or not the treaty contained secret military clauses—an allegation frequently made, and as frequently denied by Italy—the pact as published was itself a contravention of Italy's existing treaty engagements with Yugoslavia.

ITALY AND JUGOSLAVIA DISAGREE ON EFFECT OF TREATY

In the treaty of January 27, 1924, which was founded on “the respect of each for the rights of the other both on land and sea”—Italy and Yugoslavia had promised that, in the event of international complications, if they were agreed that their common interests were threatened or might be threatened, they would consult one another as to the steps to be taken in common to protect those interests. Yugoslavs held that the Treaty of Tirana trespassed upon their own interests, and charged that this was why it had been deliberately concluded without any prior attempt on Italy's part to communicate its contents to Yugoslavia. Thus, according to Yugoslavia, it disregarded the spirit of the 1924 treaty in a double sense.

What the Yugoslav press vociferously objected to in the Treaty of Tirana was that it violated the oft-quoted principle of “the Balkans for the Balkan peoples.” It gave Italy a foothold in Albania from which it

might proceed in course of time to occupy other portions of the peninsula. Viewed thus, the treaty constituted a serious menace to European peace.

Italy, on the contrary, assumed the position that by guaranteeing the *status quo* in Albania it was acting directly in the interests of European peace. Nothing was more provocative of war than a situation in which a weak central government invited attack on itself by groups of rebels or of irregulars enjoying subsidies from interested foreign governments. Thus the Treaty of Tirana, by diminishing danger of rebellion in Albania, was making a positive contribution to the safety of Europe as a whole.

ITALY ACCUSES JUGOSLAVIA OF MILITARY PREPARATIONS

With opposite points of view thus categorically expressed, the issue hung fire for three months. But on March 18, 1927, it suddenly reached a second crisis when the Italian Government notified Great Britain, France and Germany that it had proof that Yugoslavia was engaged in rapid mobilization of its army with intent to invade Albania.

Jugoslavia countered by denying through its London legation that it was engaged in military preparations on either its Albanian or its Italian frontiers. To prove its innocence it offered to permit a neutral commission to investigate the frontiers immediately.

After deciding that it was inexpedient to lay the affair before a special session of the Council of the League of Nations, the British, French and German Governments made arrangements for the early dispatch to the Yugoslav-Albanian frontier of a commission of investigation composed of British, French and German representatives in Belgrade. To assure its impartiality, the commission was to be accompanied on its tour by both Italian and Yugoslav officials.

Italy refused, however, to participate in the proposed inquiry and the plan was consequently abandoned, after innumerable delays, Mussolini having explained toward the end of April that while the facts of the case fully bore out the necessity for his original warning there no longer existed any "incident" to discuss. On May 3, Sir Austen Chamberlain made a definite announcement

to the British House of Commons that no commission of inquiry would be appointed, since in any case all it could do at such a late date would be to stir up controversies which might now be considered obsolete.

NO SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE YET REACHED

Although Mussolini was averse to appointing a neutral commission of inquiry, he did not in principle oppose another suggestion put forward by Great Britain, France and Germany—viz., that Italy and Yugoslavia undertake to settle their differences by direct negotiation. Since there had been no breaking off of diplomatic relations between his country and Yugoslavia, Mussolini saw no obstacle to prevent conversations with Yugoslav representatives. Great Britain and France urged both countries to adopt moderate policies and suggested as a basis of compromise that Yugoslavia ratify the Neptune Conventions in return for an Italian undertaking, public or private, never to take advantage of the Treaty of Tirana to interfere in Albanian domestic affairs. Conversations had barely been arranged for, however, when Mussolini suddenly announced that since the Treaty of Tirana had been concluded between Italy and Albania in the full exercise of their sovereign rights, and since the treaty was in no way directed against any other State, the question of its reconsideration could not in any case arise during the course of the conversations.

This reservation divested the proposed conference of the precise function which the European powers had in the first place suggested it should fulfil, and no further steps were taken to convoke it. Jugoslavia was particularly reluctant to have the Treaty of Tirana barred from the discussion, for what it feared was the repetition of incidents similar to that of March 18 unless a general agreement were reached concerning the implications of the new treaty.

UNREST AND CHANGING INTERNATIONAL BALANCES

Meanwhile Jugoslavia was chagrined by the success of Italy in concluding an agreement with Hungary on April 5, whereby the latter secured a commercial outlet to the Adriatic through the Italian port of Fiume.

This agreement signaled the failure of Yugoslavia to win Hungarian trade for the Dalmatian port of Spalato. Already Yugoslavia had become more than a little uneasy at the spectacle of Italy's growing retinue of Balkan allies, to which the latest recruit was added on March 8 when, by ratifying the Bessarabian treaty, Italy bound Rumania to itself by the ties of a new obligation.

The whole period since November, 1926, has been rife with sensational rumors, some of them almost incredible, others highly circumstantial, indicating the considerable unrest which exists in the Adriatic region. It is impossible, so close to events and in the absence of published official documents to indicate, even approximately, where the truth lies between the contradictory reports now current. But apart from the question of its veracity, the propaganda of the various parties to the discussion has a value of its own, for it indicates at least something of Italian and Balkan attitudes.

ITALIAN RUMORS CONCERNING JUGOSLAV ACTIVITIES

From Italian sources have come numerous charges of Yugoslav complicity in Albanian revolutionary schemes: There has been a steady flow of Yugoslav money into Albania to assist the enemies of the government. Retired Yugoslav officers have been found leading bands of Albanian irregulars along the border. A rebellion in November, 1926, in the Scutari region was engineered and financed in Yugoslavia. As early as December, 1926, the concentration of Yugoslav troops on the Albanian frontier began. In March, 1927, 10,000 Yugoslav gendarmes were added to the troops already there. Yugoslavia imported large quantities of Dutch rifles and over three thousand boxes of ammunition together with several machine guns. Yugoslavia has been constructing railroads with a rapidity unwarranted by its peace-time needs. The new railroads lead to the Italian frontiers. Yugoslavia has been scouring Austria for all available copies of Austrian war maps of Albania. Yugoslav army officers make a practice of attending meetings of the Albanian Revolutionary Committee. So do Yugoslav civil officials. The latter have been engaged in enrolling irregulars at \$20 a month against the prospec-

tive war with Albania. For a number of months Yugoslavia has been conducting a most vigorous war propaganda.

Such are the rumors on which Italy has been fed.

JUGOSLAV SUSPICIONS OF ITALY

Jugoslav rumors concerning the activities of Italy have been no less sensational. Among them are such items as the following: Italy spent the first two weeks of December, 1926, in concentrating troops at convenient points along the Yugoslav frontier. Several thousand Italian troops landed in Albania. There have been six Italian warships in Valona harbor. Large quantities of general army supplies and ammunition were landed in Albania. Numbers of Italian officers have been masquerading in Albania as tourists and as earthquake relief workers. For the last two years Italy has been speeding up military preparations in Albania, building roads suitable for military use and preparing precise maps, based on a new and costly topographical survey. Until a Yugoslav protest forced a change of plan, Italy intended to send no fewer than four battalions of army engineers to aid in "reconstructing" Durazzo after the earthquake. Italians have been settling in Valona by the hundred since the ratification of the Tirana Treaty. Italian army officers have been practically running the civil administration of Albania.

Reports such as the above, and others even more highly colored have been circulated and given credence in Italy and Yugoslavia respectively.

ALBANIA A RETARDED COUNTRY

Meanwhile, to understand what has been occurring in Albania itself, it is necessary to recall at this point the general character of the country as well as the outstanding events of its more recent history.

In considering the relation of Albania to all Adriatic affairs there must first of all be taken into account the fact that it is a small country, in fact the smallest in Europe if one excepts Monaco, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg. It has about two hundred miles

of seacoast, and its width is nowhere greater than eighty miles.

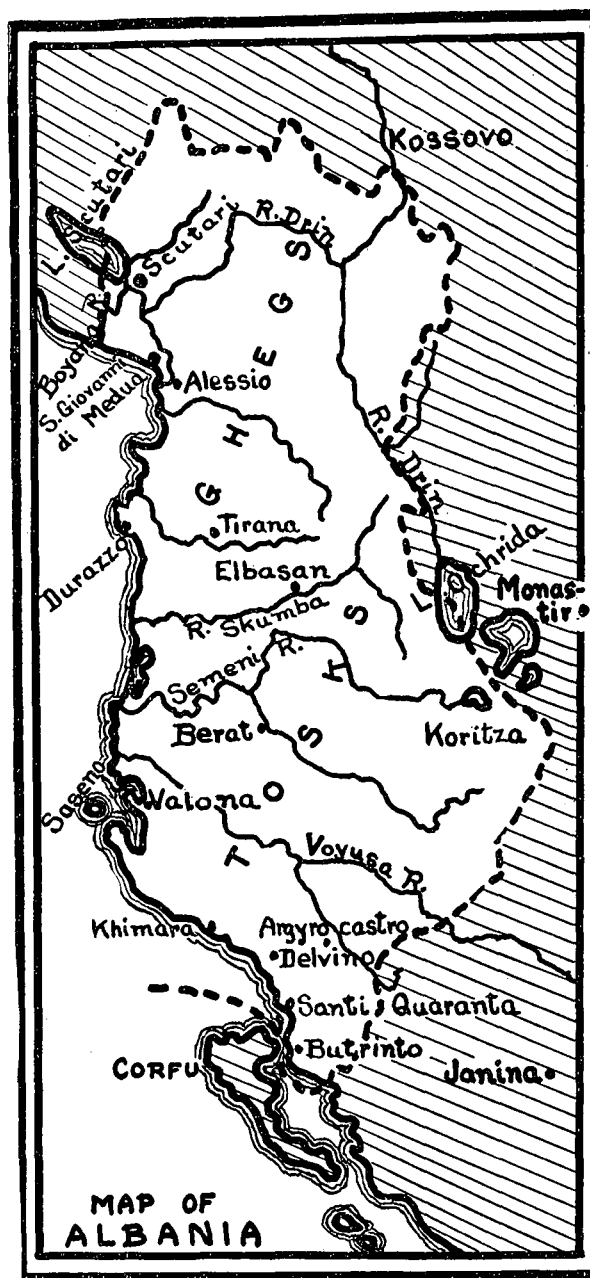
Its point of view is affected not only by its size, but also by the sparseness of its population, by the peculiar social systems in vogue in the country and by the difficult physical characteristics of the land itself. It is also affected by the special rôle its people played in the Ottoman Empire, and by the ambitions its neighbors have cherished with respect to it since the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

The Albanians of Albania proper, generally believed to number something less than one million, are divided today into two distinct groups—the Ghegs of the north and the Tosks of the south. Among the former more primitive conditions exist, on the whole, than among the southerners. The Ghegs still adhere for the most part to an ancient tribal organization. Inter-tribal blood feuds are rife among them, retarding the development of the country and being responsible for the annual assassination of a substantial fraction of the adult male population.

The Tosks of the south have emerged within the last century and a half from a similar tribal organization and are for the most part under a feudal system comparable to that which prevailed in a large part of Europe during the Middle Ages, although lacking the emphasis of the latter on distinctions of caste. Among the Tosks the blood-feud is giving way before the custom of settling questions of honor by the payment of money. But in the south, as in the north, the inhabitants of more remote districts still adhere to the more primitive social customs of the tribal system.

INFLUENCES RETARDING ALBANIAN DEVELOPMENT

The Albanian language in its various dialects is commonly spoken throughout the country, but the difference between Gheg and Tosk dialects is sufficient to prevent free intercourse between individuals who are not acquainted with both. Partly owing to the limited Albanian vocabulary, the language of Adriatic commerce is Italian while the language of business in southern Albania is Greek. Approximately two-thirds of the Albanians profess Mohammedanism, the re-



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mainder Christianity. Of the Mohammedans, the majority of those in the north belong to the orthodox Sunnite sect, while the majority in the south are Bektashites. The Christians are divided among Roman Catholics in the north and Greek Orthodox in the south.

Religious lines are not drawn so strictly in Albania as elsewhere in the Balkans. Here members of the same family occasionally profess different religions. The same individual is sometimes supplied with both a Christian and a Moslem name to be used in-

differently as convenience suggests; most intimate relationships frequently exist between Moslems and Christians.

This easy-going attitude toward religion, which distinguishes Albanians from their neighbors, was responsible for the fact that so many Albanians turned Moslem soon after the Turkish conquest. Other Balkan peoples when faced with the alternative of changing their religion or losing certain of their civil rights preferred to forfeit their civil rights. The majority of Albanians on the contrary chose to turn Moslem rather than to relinquish their arms and their estates.

The rugged character of Albania has served to localize the interests of its inhabitants and to encourage separatist tendencies. High mountain ranges have cut the country up into a patchwork of more or less isolated communities. There are plains along the sea-coast, and beside the lakes and in the ascending river-valleys where intercommunication is comparatively easy. But there are several tribes which still have almost no communication with the outside world.

LACK OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The mountain ranges not only retard inland travel but in some cases cut the sea-coast towns off from communication with each other except by water. This is particularly true of the district south of Valona where the two harbors of Santi Quaranta and Butrinto are separated from their immediate hinterland by mountain ranges running parallel to the coast so that commerce from the interior in this section has to be forwarded northward through Valona.

Valona is the least unsatisfactory port on the Albanian coast, but its relation to the interior is not as advantageous as that of Durazzo farther north. As a result the latter harbor is receiving the greater attention, despite the disadvantages of storms, shallow water and sandbars. San Giovanni di Medua and Scutari are in use as ports in the northern part of the country, although the anchorage in neither is particularly good. A receding sea has left a considerable amount of marshy land behind it along the Albanian coast, with the result that malaria is endemic among coast-dwellers.

Roads in Albania for the most part follow the river valleys. The majority are of recent development, having been constructed for heavy traffic only since the war. Their total length is about three hundred and ten miles. The only railroad in the country is a narrow-gauge line which runs from Scutari in the north through Durazzo to Valona in the south. Another line is now under construction between Durazzo and Tirana—a short distance of about twenty-five miles.

ALBANIAN NATIONALISM SLOW TO DEVELOP

The foregoing considerations make it easy to understand why Albania has been one of the last countries of Europe to develop a nationalist sense.

Its society has been primitive; its language was not reduced to writing until the end of the nineteenth century; it has had no traditional written literature; its vocabulary has been limited; it has had no unity of religion, and very little religious fanaticism; the interests of its people have of necessity been local.

Albania's experience as a part of the Ottoman Empire, moreover, did little to diminish these separatist influences. During four and a half centuries of Turkish rule there were few attempts to establish effective administrative control over the country as a whole and comparatively little was done to disturb Albanian manners of living. Then, too, along with the Albanians' strong sense of local attachment there also grew up among them during this long period a sense of pride in the unique position their country occupied in the European portion of the Ottoman Empire. A mountainous country of excellent fighters, the only country in Europe that was predominantly Moslem, its inhabitants were given honorable positions in the Sultan's service. Instead of being conscripted for army service, they served as well-paid volunteers. Albanians formed the Sultan's bodyguard. Albanian colonies were placed here and there in the Balkans, each one to form a nucleus of loyalty against periods of disaffection. This traditional loyalty of Albanians to the Ottoman cause naturally did not facilitate the growth of a modern nationalist spirit among them.

Finally it should be noted that during the closing years of the Ottoman period a number of more specific influences militated against the growth of nationalism in Albania. Sultan Abdul Hamid, for example, took occasion to ban from the country all newspapers and books and closed Albanian schools almost without exception. These restrictions prevented the existence in that country of three of the readiest agencies for propagating nationalist sentiment. Not even when the revolution of 1908 brought the Young Turks to power in Constantinople and the ban on schools and publications was removed, did these normal agencies of nationalist propaganda become available for use by nationalist leaders, for the Albanians soon discovered that both schools and publications were now to be used exclusively to promote a vigorous policy of centralization, of "Turkification," and not at all for the promotion of Albanian independence.

ORIGINS OF NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that no nationalist influences were at work in Albania during the period of the Ottoman régime. Such influences were at work sporadically throughout the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century if not ubiquitous they were at least fairly well disseminated. By 1878 an "Albanian League for the Defense of the Rights of Albanian Nationality" had been formed. When this was dissolved somewhat later by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the nationalist movement was promoted abroad by emigrant Albanians who organized National Committees and smuggled nationalist literature into Albania itself for secret distribution. By 1904 the movement had developed sufficiently to permit the calling in Bucharest, Rumania, of a first National Albanian Assembly which drew up and promulgated a set of resolutions.

After the Young Turk revolution of 1908, already referred to, Albanian nationalists anticipated the establishment of an autonomous Albania, and began immediately to organize Albanian schools and to circulate Albanian newspapers. They were proportionately disappointed when they realized that the policy of the Young Turks did not include

autonomy for Albania and that like other parts of the Empire, Albania was included in their general scheme of centralized control. Turkish was taught in the schools and every attempt to promote Albanian nationalist sentiment was opposed. Troops were sent to enforce the will of the Turkish authorities. The clashes that occurred between Turks and Albanians (1909-1912) not only intensified the ambitions of the nationalists themselves but also did much toward creating a corporate consciousness in Albania as a whole.

But still it was evident to observers that in 1911, or even in 1913 at the close of the Balkan Wars, a nationalist conviction in the modern sense of the term had only begun to exist in Albania. This was illustrated in the mildness of the demands submitted to the Young Turks by Albanian radicals in 1911. It was illustrated again more forcibly during the unhappy period in 1913-14 when Albania was having its first experience of corporate existence and found the temptation to separatism too strong to resist. (See page 116.) Even today it is still true that the mass of Albanian people have not become possessed of a vigorously nationalist mentality in spite of the fact that extreme forms of nationalist sentiment surround them on all sides.

ALBANIA'S PROGRESS TOWARD POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

How then, it may be asked, has their country achieved the status of an independent state?

Two factors are chiefly responsible, one domestic, the other external. Albania's independent status is due partly to the fervor of the relatively few militant nationalists whom the country has succeeded in producing during the last two decades; but it is partly due, too, to the fact that, for reasons of their own, in spite of Albania's lack of political sophistication, the Great Powers have found it convenient to confer upon it a theoretical status of nationhood.

Under the Ottoman régime it has been seen that Albania had no unified corporate existence. It was merely a geographical expression. Its separate provinces were governed by pashas of equal standing ap-

pointed from Constantinople. But even after Albania ceased to form a part of the Ottoman Empire it continued to be dominated by outside influences, often working at cross purposes, often producing situations as disturbing to the sensibilities of southeastern Europe as they were kaleidoscopic to the eye of the observer. In the account which follows it will be seen that the erratic progress of Albania toward the status of nationhood was due fully as much to the fact that the ambitions of a number of states converged upon it as to the fact that an indigenous nationalist movement was gathering momentum.

During the years 1911 to 1913 Albania broke away, although without premeditation, from the Ottoman Empire. As already noted, the Young Turk policy of alternately promising desired reform in Albania and sending armed expeditions to break the spirit of autonomist groups had the result of exasperating Albanian leaders and of stiffening opposition to Turkey. But an end came to these intermittent hostilities in 1912 when a Turco-Albanian peace was concluded, according to which Albania acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan, while in return he accorded to Albania a degree of independence approximating that which it had enjoyed before 1908, augmented by the additional right of establishing Albanian schools and Albanian printing presses throughout the country. The Albania to which these rights were accorded was to consist of the four Turkish vilayets of Scutari, Janina, Monastir and Kossovo. (See map page 112.)

BALKAN AMBITIONS IN ALBANIA THWARTED

The proposal to include these four vilayets in Albania precipitated the Balkan War of 1912 and introduced the element of European interference in Albanian national affairs. Montenegro, Serbia and Greece each laid claim to certain sections of the territories promised to Albania. It was to make their claims effective that in company with their ally, Bulgaria, they joined in active hostilities against Turkey in October 1912.

To Serbia an outlet on the Adriatic Sea was a definite necessity. A landlocked

country, its position made it dependent upon Austria for a market for its goods; but since Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, Austria and Serbia had been on terms of almost open enmity with each other and their common boundary was liable at any moment to be closed to trade, a situation which would leave Serbia with congested stores upon its hands.

Driven by its own necessities and ambitions, Serbia now dispatched troops to Albania. They succeeded in occupying Durazzo and Alessio, unmindful of the protests their action evoked both from Albania and from the European powers. Accompanying the Serbian army on this expedition were Montenegrin troops, for the government of Montenegro intended to take over permanently not only the town of Scutari but also the Boyana and Drin Rivers which, with their double outlet from Lake Scutari to the Adriatic, would afford a valuable aid to Montenegrin commerce.

It was partly the breakdown of the Turkish lines of defense, partly, too, a vigorous Albanian reaction against the Serbo-Montenegrin invasion that caused Albania to assert its own independence.

In November 1912 on its own initiative it established a provisional national government for the first time under Ismail Kemal Bey.

REASONS FOR AUSTRIAN SUPPORT OF ALBANIA

During the negotiations which took place at the Ambassador's Conference at London late in 1912, marking the interval between the first and second Balkan Wars, there was excellent opportunity to observe the effect of foreign policies, and especially of Austrian and Italian policies, upon the status of the new Albania.

All Austrian policies of the period were dominated by the single purpose to press southeastward toward fulfilment of its dream of controlling at least the economic if not also the political life of the Balkan countries. A strong fleet in the Adriatic, the control of the whole Dalmatian coast and the prevention of a union between the Balkan Serbs and the Serbo-Croats were the inevitable corollaries of that policy.

The greatest single obstacle Austria had encountered in its southeastward progress was Serbia. To forestall the creation of a Serbian corridor through Albania to the Adriatic, Austria determined to support an independent Albania in the forthcoming Balkan settlement.

CULTURAL PENETRATION BY ITALY AND AUSTRIA

With Italy, meanwhile, Austria had long since come to an understanding on the subject of Albania. Each frankly recognized that the other aspired to control the Albanian coast, but both agreed tentatively when they joined the Triple Alliance in 1880 to forego annexation of any part of the country. But this did not prevent both Italy and Austria from engaging in the cultural penetration of Albania. Austria-Hungary claimed the right to protect Catholics in the country and supplied a number of the monks and priests who served the northern districts. Italy, on the other hand, established schools which for decades enjoyed an unrivalled prestige in the country. Again Austria controlled the Albanian coastal trade and subsidized a number of local Albanian leaders in the north, while Italy was on excellent terms with other leaders in the south. Each country watched the other jealously. Italy was known to be anxious to reimburse itself in Albania for failure of its colonial ambitions in north Africa. Consequently it was as much to keep Italy out of Valona as to prevent Serbia from occupying Durazzo that Austria demanded independence for Albania at the London Conference of 1912.

Italy, meanwhile, supported the principle of an independent Albania because it feared that at any convenient juncture Austrian agents might foment disturbances in Albania serious enough to warrant Austrian intervention, ostensibly in the interests of law and order. It was recalled that similar tactics had been used by Austria to acquire Bosnia and Herzegovina. Italy wished to guard against their application to Albania itself.

Plans for the establishment of an independent Albania were developed during the London Conference of Ambassadors in 1912, but were not put into effect until after the

close of the Second Balkan War in 1913. The basis of settlement included the election of a foreign prince to rule over Albania, the appointment of an International Commission of Control to establish an appropriate administration, and the dispatch to Albania of a boundary commission to determine the precise extent of Albania's jurisdiction.

Soon after the International Commission of Control arrived in Albania, Ismail Kemal Bey, head of the provisional Albanian Government, transferred his powers to it pending the arrival of the new ruler.

ALBANIA'S FIRST GOVERNMENT FAILS

Meanwhile the boundary commission was finding its duties somewhat difficult to perform. Italy and Austria, vigilant each to see that the other secured no special privilege in the Adriatic, were united in a common desire to prevent Greece from encroaching on the territory they were so sedulously keeping out of each other's reach. But during the war Greece had fought for and captured Janina and was now in occupation of the Greek-speaking districts of Southern Albania. The chief difficulty of the boundary commission seemed to be to prevail upon the Greeks to withdraw. Even after a formal agreement had been signed (Protocol of Florence, December 17, 1913), a self-constituted, autonomous Greek government in the region of Argyrocastro, Khimara, Santi Quaranta and Delvino insisted on continuing its régime. It was not until April, 1914 that the Greek officials finally evacuated the region; and then the transfer was accompanied by demands for a special degree of autonomy and a number of extraordinary privileges for the district. These demands were not met until 1917, when in an altered form they were granted in principle during the Conference of Corfu. They included political and military autonomy under the International Commission of Control and the right to use the Greek language in schools and before authorities.

Prince William of Wied, chosen by the Powers to become ruler of Albania, arrived at Durazzo in March, 1914. He maintained his rule for only six months, during which

period the country fell apart into five or six seemingly irreconcilable elements. Owing partly to his own inexperience and incapacity and partly to the vitality of the separatist and factional influences in Albania already noted, Prince William was unable to accomplish anything tangible toward stabilization and centralization of government. After his departure in September, 1914 the authority of the International Commission of Control was confined to the Valona district; the remainder of the country had frankly disintegrated under local leaders. Albania's first attempt at national self-government was a failure.

GREAT WAR REVIVES QUESTION OF ALBANIA'S STATUS

The Great War was the signal for a recrudescence of Balkan and Italian ambitions at the expense of Albania. The story of the war years themselves is quickly told. Austria speedily overran the greater part of the country but was eventually driven out by Allied troops in 1918, and did not again constitute an important element in the situation. Into Austria's place, however, Yugoslavia stepped, demanding to receive in addition to former Austrian territory on the Dalmatian coast a considerable portion of northern Albania as well, this portion to include the Drin and Boyana river valleys.

Italy, once the inhibitions of its alliance with Austria had been thrown off, turned its attention with renewed eagerness to the coveted territory which lay across the Straits of Otranto at the entrance to the Adriatic, only forty-five miles from the Italian coast. The secret Treaty of London (1915), which arranged the compensations Italy would receive at the close of the war in return for its participation on the side of the Allies, promised that Italy was to exercise a protectorate over Albania, in the sense that it would be permitted to direct Albanian foreign policy. Accordingly, in anticipation of the fulfillment of this award, Italy had met the Austrian invasion of Albania by declaring the latter an independent state. Italian troops occupied Valona and Saseno; Italian ships policed the Albanian coast.

Meanwhile Greece revived its ambitions

with respect to the Greek-speaking sections of southern Albania. Viewing Italian ascendancy in Albania with misgiving, it re-occupied the towns it had so reluctantly relinquished in favor of Albania at the close of the Balkan War. Although the Italian and Greek occupations were said to be provisional only, each government suspected the other of intending to make its foothold in Albania permanent.

PARTITION OF ALBANIA AVERTED

It now developed that European influence, which in 1913 had been responsible for establishing an independent Albania, was now to be exercised on behalf of the partition of the country. At the Paris Peace Conference and during subsequent conferences of the delegates of the Allied Powers it became apparent that not only Italian and Greek but also Yugoslav ambitions with respect to Albania met with the approval of British and French diplomats. France was not adverse to having the northern section of Albania bestowed upon its ally, Yugoslavia. Great Britain was willing to compensate Greece for disappointment it had suffered elsewhere by confirming it in the possession of Southern Albania. Similarly it was the hope of British statesmen that the chagrin of Italy at losing the rewards promised it in Asia Minor would be lessened were it conceded the port of Valona in addition to a mandate over a reduced Albanian state. It thus appeared as if the partitioning of Albania was a foregone conclusion.

But at this point two unexpected factors caused a reversal of general expectations. These two factors were the opposition of President Wilson and the vitality of the Albanian nationalist movement.

While the Albanian situation remained fluid for some months, American objections to the proposed division of Albania became so insistent that it had finally to be abandoned. President Wilson intimated that he could not acquiesce in the tripartite division of the Albanian people against their own vehement protests. Moreover the Albanian nationalists themselves, interpreting the Italian, Greek and Yugoslav

encroachments on their former territory as a warning of approaching extinction for their own country, summoned a National Assembly (January 28, 1920) and proclaimed a new nationalist government at Tirana under a Council of Regency, in which the four Albanian religious groups were equally represented. A fundamental program of complete freedom from foreign control having been announced, Albanian troops proceeded to attack the Italians at Valona, planning after the latter had been ejected to turn their attention to the occupying forces of Greece and Yugoslavia. Not long after the offensive began, however, Italy withdrew its troops from the mainland in return for an agreement (August, 1920) whereby it retained the island of Saseno opposite Valona harbor.

ALBANIA ADMITTED TO LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In December of the same year Albania, with its boundaries still undefined and a government not yet accorded *de jure* recognition by any power, was admitted as a member of the League of Nations, gaining thereby what its leaders hoped would prove to be undisputed and permanent recognition as an independent state.

Jugoslavia and Greece were reluctant to admit the full consequences of Albania's admission to the League of Nations. Late in 1921, before the Conference of Ambassadors had announced its decision as to the precise boundaries Albania would receive, Yugoslavia tried forcibly to seize the River Drin in Northern Albania. And even after the Conference of Ambassadors had decided (November 9, 1921) to confirm in all essential respects the boundary of 1913, Greece failed to acquiesce in the award in so far as it concerned Southern Albania; it was not until 1923 that relations between Greece and Albania were regularized by the exchange of diplomatic representatives.

Although the boundary decision of the Conference of Ambassadors clarified the situation in Albania substantially by giving the reconstituted Albanian Government a precise area of jurisdiction, a supplementary decision made by it at the same time served to obscure the future development of the Albanian state.

DECLARATION OF THE AMBASSADORS' CONFERENCE, 1921

This declaration, registered unostentatiously with the League of Nations almost a year after its adoption, gave to the Albanian question a new aspect. It was worded as follows:

The British Empire, France, Italy and Japan, recognizing that the independence of Albania, and the integrity and inalienability of her frontiers, as fixed by their decision of November 9, 1921, is a question of international importance,

Recognizing that the violation of these frontiers, or of the independence of Albania, might constitute a danger for the strategic safety of Italy,

Have agreed as follows:

1. If Albania should at any time find it impossible to maintain intact her territorial integrity, she shall be free to address a request to the Council of the League of Nations for foreign assistance.

2. The Governments of the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan decide that, in the above-mentioned event, they will instruct their Representatives on the Council of the League of Nations to recommend that the restoration of the territorial frontiers of Albania should be entrusted to Italy.

3. In case of a threat to Albania's integrity or independence, whether territorial or economic, owing to foreign aggression or to any other event, and in case Albania has not availed herself within a reasonable time of the right provided for in Article I the above-mentioned Governments will bring the situation before the Council of the League of Nations.

If the Council considers intervention necessary, the above-mentioned Governments will give their representatives the instructions stipulated in Article 2.

4. If the Council of the League of Nations decides, by a majority, that intervention is not expedient, the above-mentioned Governments shall reconsider the question in conformity with the principle enunciated in the preamble to this Declaration, namely that any modification in the frontiers of Albania constitutes a danger for the strategic safety of Italy.

Done in Paris, on November the ninth, nineteen hundred and twenty-one.

HARDINGE OF PENSHURST,
JULES CAMBON,
BONIN,
K. ISHII.

The obvious effect of this declaration was to compensate Italy for the failure of the Powers to award it the Albanian mandate it had expected. But in theory it did violence to the spirit of the League Cov-

enant both in limiting the Council's freedom of action and in entrusting to a single designated state a practical monopoly of interest in the control of foreign relations of another member state.

In practice the effects of the limitation on the Council's freedom of action have already been felt. In March last, when Herr Stresemann, President of the League Council, received Italy's complaint concerning alleged military preparations of Yugoslavia, it was his first impulse to summon a special meeting of the Council to act on the complaint; but Italy and Great Britain opposed League intervention and Herr Stresemann dropped his suggestion speedily when he realized that the Declaration of 1921 might have the effect of forcing the Council to place the whole matter in the hands of Italy, itself one of the parties to the dispute.

The Declaration of 1921 illustrates the fact that Albania's present position is not such that it can hope immediately to establish for itself a status of independence as complete in practice as it was in theory when League membership was conferred upon it.

ALBANIA'S GAINS IN STABILITY

On the other hand, Albania has already gained a certain degree of stability. The League Commission of Inquiry which visited Albania five years ago was convinced even then that it was a mistake to suggest, as some did, that the Albanians are not inherently a nation, that they will always be unable to exist as an independent, modern State and that they will inevitably be divided up sooner or later among their neighbors. The same Commission of Inquiry pointed out that a number of unifying influences were active among the Albanians. Among these there had always been a sentiment of patriotism stronger than religious divergences, and more recently the experiences of the war years had given a new impulse to Albanian nationalism which had by this time extended to all classes of the population.

Those who hold the same opinion as the Commission of Inquiry have pointed out that even in the comparatively short time

that has elapsed since the Commission presented its report Albania has advanced a step further toward the realization of nationhood, in that it has established a régime which for a period of more than two years has enjoyed a relative freedom from disturbances. The only serious uprising, which occurred in November, 1926 in the northern section of the country, was speedily quelled. Not since Albania first achieved a corporate existence in 1913 has it had a régime as unbroken as the present one. Under previous administrations revolutions averaged one in nine months; under Ahmed Bey Zogu there have been almost two years of continuous freedom from civil conflict.

ITALY'S INFLUENCE IN ALBANIA EXTENSIVE

Supported by interested groups in Yugoslavia, Ahmed Bey Zogu, by a coup d'état in 1924, wrested the government of Albania from the hands of his predecessor, Bishop Fan Noli. But it has not been his effective personality alone that has kept Ahmed Bey Zogu in power since that date. He has had to rely heavily on foreign aid to support his régime. On the advice of the British representative in Albania he employed a British colonel to draft a program for organizing the Albanian administration in detail. Another British army officer was engaged to reorganize the gendarmerie. But Italian influence was far more extensive than British. Numbers of Italian advisers and civil officials were employed by the Tirana government. When a Bank of Issue was projected for Albania the League Finance Committee suggested in 1923 that several member states cooperate in furnishing the requisite capital. The control of the enterprise was actually given, however, to an Italian group, although a few Yugoslav banks, a Swiss bank and a Belgian bank also participated. During 1926 this national bank was engaged in reforming the currency, withdrawing former alien currencies from circulation and substituting an Albanian currency based on the gold franc.

Another important factor contributing to Italian domination over Albania is the fact that the majority of Albania's trade

is with Italy. Over 75 per cent of Albanian imports come from Italy and over 50 per cent of its exports are destined for Italy. Moreover in July, 1925, Albania contracted with the Italian Government for a loan of fifty million Albanian francs to finance projected public works. The revenues from the Albanian customs and national monopolies were allocated to the service of this loan.

Thus, even without the Treaty of Tirana and the Declaration of 1921 Italy had a powerful hold on Albania. Through its loans, its concessions, its emigrant administrators, and its trade it had already established a very practical control over Albania's economic life. If by the instrumentality of the Treaty of Tirana and the Declaration of 1921 it can succeed in maintaining Ahmed Bey Zogu in power indefinitely in the face of any opposition that may arise in Albania, Jugoslavia or else-

where, there will remain little cause for the Italian Government to regret the failure of the Powers in 1920 to grant it a mandate over Albania.

RIVAL ADRIATIC AMBITIONS WILL REMAIN KEEN

Whether in its forthcoming discussion of the Albanian question the League Council is disposed to uphold Italy, on the one hand, or to insist, on the other hand, on a modification of the Treaty of Tirana and the Declaration of 1921, Italy's strong hold upon Albania's national life will still remain. Moreover, Yugoslav ambitions will still run counter to the extension of Italian influence in the Adriatic. Whatever the *modus vivendi* arrived at by the Council, there seems little prospect of its being able immediately to eliminate this fundamental conflict which is the essence of the Adriatic problem.

ANNEX I

PACT OF FRIENDSHIP AND CORDIAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF ITALY AND THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES

The Government of His Majesty the King of Italy and the Government of His Majesty the King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, being firmly resolved to secure peace and to safeguard the results obtained during the great war and sanctioned by the Treaties of Peace, have concurred in the conclusion of the present Convention as a natural consequence of the friendship between the two Kingdoms and of the respect of each for the rights of the other both on land and on sea, and have agreed upon the following Articles:

ARTICLE I.

The two High Contracting Parties undertake to afford each other support and cordial cooperation in order to maintain the position established by the Treaties of Peace concluded at Trianon, St. Germain and Neuilly, and to ensure respect and fulfilment of the obligations laid down in those Treaties.

ARTICLE II.

In the event of one of the High Contracting Parties suffering an unprovoked attack from any Power or Powers, the other Party undertakes to remain neutral throughout the conflict. Furthermore, in the event of the safety and the interests of one of the High Contracting Parties being threatened as the result of forcible incursions from without, the other Party undertakes to afford political and dip-

lomatic support in the form of friendly cooperation for the purpose of assisting to remove the external cause of such threat.

ARTICLE III.

In the event of international complications, if the two High Contracting Parties are agreed that their common interests are or may be threatened, they undertake to consult one another as to the steps to be taken in common to protect those interests.

ARTICLE IV.

The present Convention shall remain in force for five years, and may be denounced or renewed one year before its expiration.

ARTICLE V.

The present Treaty shall be ratified and the ratifications shall be exchanged at Rome.

It shall come into force immediately upon the exchange of ratifications.

In faith whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed it in duplicate and have thereto affixed their seals.

Done at Rome on January 27, 1924.

BENITO MUSSOLINI,
NIK. P. PACHITCH,
M. NINTCHITCH.

ANNEX II

PACT OF FRIENDSHIP AND SECURITY BETWEEN ALBANIA AND ITALY

Article 1. Albania and Italy recognize that any disturbance whatsoever directed against the *status quo*, political, juridical and territorial of Albania, is contrary to their reciprocal interests.

Article 2. For the protection of the above-mentioned interests the High Contracting Parties pledge themselves to lend their mutual support and their cordial cooperation; they pledge themselves equally not to conclude with other Powers political and military agreements to the prejudice of the interests of the other party, as defined in the present Pact.

Article 3. The High Contracting Parties pledge themselves to submit to a special procedure of con-

ciliation or arbitration matters of difference that may arise, which it shall not have been possible to adjust by ordinary diplomatic procedure. The form of this procedure of peaceful regulation shall be the subject of a special convention which shall be concluded within a short time.

Article 4. The present Pact is for a period of five years and can be denounced or renewed one year before its expiration.

Article 5. The present Pact will be ratified and subsequently registered with the League of Nations. Ratifications will be exchanged in Rome.

Done at Tirana, November 27, 1926.

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